

[Languedoc](#) [Intro](#) [Things to See](#) [Things to Do](#) [Holidays](#) [Wine](#) [Languedoc Life](#) [Getting There](#) [Property](#) [History](#) [Cathars](#) [Cathar Castles](#) [Geography](#) [Weather](#) [More Info](#)

Languedoc
Books & DVDs
Movies
Photos
Houses to buy
Houses to rent



Manoir for sale
South of France
20+ rooms
1.3 Hs Parc & Pool
views of Pyrenees
guest wing



Château for sale
+ 2 apartments in
historic Aude town
1000 m2 habitable
37 rooms, Pool
Terraced gardens



Medieval Castle
(chateau fort) for
sale in the South of
France. Estate, Pool,
Tennis, etc Fully
modernised.

Political Geography of the Languedoc: The département of the Gard (🇫🇷 Gard):
The Camargue (Occitan 🇫🇷 Camargo, Occitan Provençal: Camarga)

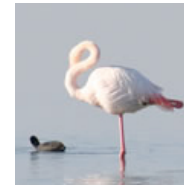
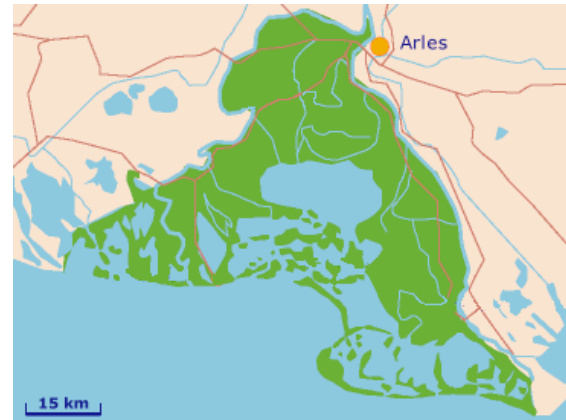
The Camargue is a triangular area lying on the coast between the Languedoc-Roussillon and Provence. It is a river delta where the Rhône meets the sea - a marshy island bounded by two branches of the Rhône and the Mediterranean Sea. With an area of over 930 km² (360 sq. miles), the Camargue is western Europe's largest river delta, with exceptional biological diversity, and home to unique breeds of horses and bulls, and to more than 400 species of birds including pink flamingos.



Much of the area is under water - inland salt water lakes, called étangs in the

Languedoc. Approximately a third of the Camargue is either lakes or marshland. The largest of these salt water lakes is the Étang du Vaccarès. Established as a national park and nature reserve in 1972, the Parc Régional de Camargue covers 820 km² including some of the wildest and most protected in Europe. It is a major world heritage wetland. A roadside museum provides background on flora, fauna, and the history of the area.

In all, the Camargue covers around 140,000 hectares, including wetlands, pastures, dunes and salt flats.



Camargue animals

Camargue Bulls



The Camargue is home to a specialised breed of bull. These bulls run in semi-liberty. They are noticeably smaller than most modern breeds of bull.



Bulls are also used in a form of bull running, during which young men called razeteurs try to pick a cockade fixed between the horns of a running bull. The bravest bulls are not killed. In fact very bravest of them warrant their own statues. This kind of bullrunning dates back to



They are raised for their distinctive meat which has a high reputation among gourmets. It is served in local dishes and in stews.



the Sixteenth century at least.



Camargue horses



Camargue horses form distinct breed, which, like the Camargue bulls, live in semi-liberty. The

Camargue is one of the oldest breeds in the world, closely related to the prehistoric horses whose remains have been found elsewhere in southern France. At birth they are coloured dark brown or black, but turn white around the fourth year (In layman's terms they are white horses, but to horsey folk they are grey, since they are not uniformly pure white all over).

Like the Camargue bulls, Camargue horses are smaller than their modern cousins. At around thirteen or fourteen hands they are technically ponies. They are used in rounding up Camargue bulls. They are never stabled, but well able to survive the humid summer heat and the biting winter cold.



Riders are called gardians. Gardians are as near to anyone comes nowadays to living the cowboy way of life. They play a major role in guarding Camarguais traditions. They live in traditional cabanes, thatched and windowless single-storey structures furnished with bulls' horns over the door to ward off evil spirits. A guardian's

traditional tools are a trident and a black hat.

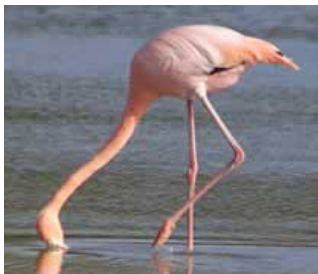
Just about anyone can enjoy European ski resorts. There are many adventurous family vacation trips to embark upon, and friends like vacation Hawaii or even Mexico vacations. It's nice to be able to vacation in the sun or enjoy other things on a family trip and get away from everyday life



Click on the following link for more or more on Camargue horses and gardians "➡"

Pink Flamingoes

The Camargue the only place in France (and one of the few anywhere around the Mediterranean) where pink flamingos nest. The flamingo population can reach 20,000 couples grouped into flocks. They favour raised nests built out of mud.



Flamingoes eat mainly plankton, and are adapted to do so - much like baleen whales: they suck water in through their bills and expel it over fine filters in their mouths straining the plankton. It is this plankton, not as sometimes claimed crustacea, that are responsible for the flamingo's pink plumage.

The flamingo is the emblem of Camargue - a modern wheeze to appeal to tourists.

Other Animals.

Other Camarguese animals include sheep, wild boar, beavers, badgers; tree frogs, water snakes, pond turtles, along with a rich array of some 400 types of bird, some of which are mentioned below.

Camargue Weather.

The climate of the Camargue can be harsh, ranging from scorching heat in summer,

Nimes FR

27 °F / -3 °C
Unknown
at 3:00 AM

[Click for Forecast](#)

A group of flamingos standing in shallow water, with their long necks curved and heads lowered, possibly feeding or resting. The water is calm, and the background is a soft, hazy landscape.



Woodlands. Woodland accounts for a small part of Camargue physically, but plays an important part in the balance of nature. Woodlands lie along the River Rhône and on sand dunes south of Vaccarès. Wooded areas provide habitat for many mammals, including rodents, foxes, and wild boar; and insects which attract nesting birds such as little egrets and night herons.

There are also rice paddies and vineyards.

Physical Geography of the Camargue

Approximate coordinates 43°32'N 4°30'E .

The Camargue has a coastline some 30 miles in length and an area of 290 sq. m., of which about a quarter consists of cultivated fertile land. Its average elevation is from 8 ft to 62 feet above sea level. Some of the étangs are remnants of old arms of the river (Remember those oxbow lakes from school geography lessons?). Flooding remains a "problem" across the region. Despite the dikes and embankments, the boundaries of the Camargue are still changed by the River Rhône as it transports huge quantities of silt and mud downstream - some 20 million cubic metres annually. Though constrained by the sea dike, the natural tendency as in all river deltas is for the coastline to move outwards. Aigues Mortes was on the coast when it was built - it was built specifically as sea port in the thirteenth century when France annexed this land. It is now some 5 km (3 miles) inland.

The Camargue lies within the département of Bouches du Rhône ("Mouths of the Rhône"). In the city of Arles, the River Rhône divides into two branches, the Petit Rhône (Little Rhône) to the west and the Grand Rhône (Great Rhône) to the east. The Petit Rhône flows into the Mediterranean Sea west of Les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, while the Grand Rhône flows into the Mediterranean Sea east of Port-Saint-Louis-du-Rhône. The south-eastern part of the Camargue is called the Ile du Plan du Bourg.

A secondary delta to the west of the Petit Rhone is known as the Petite Camargue. (little Camargue), which lies in the Gard département.

Camargue Economy

Tourism is a major source of income. The Camargue is visited by over one million tourists each year. They come to see the unique flora and fauna of the area - the famous Camargue horses, bulls, and birds - including the famous flamingos which provide a marketing brand of the Camargue National Park. Though the Étang du Vaccarès and the central islands are out of bounds, there are paths and sea dikes from which wildlife can be observed, as well as special nature trails. Ideal months for bird-watching are the mating period of April to June, with the greatest number of flamingos present between April and September.

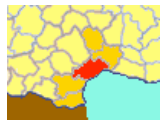
Salt marshes near Salin-de-Giraud in the southeast corner of the Camargue are famous for their salt production, producing up to 15,000 tons a day in the summer. Salt is produced along the final stretch of the Grand Rhône, an industry that dates back to Romans times (first century AD). This is one of the biggest salt works anywhere in the world. Some is used as table salt. Fleur De Sel de Camargue ("flours of salt") is hand raked and harvested. Only the premium, top layer of the salt bed is used for this. The name Fleur De Sel comes from the aroma of flours - violets in particular - that develops as the salt dries. In the past, glassworts and salt crystals were incinerated to yield soda for soap making and glassmaking, but this plant soda was replaced by industrial soda by the end of the 19th century.

After the Second World War, the northern marshes of the Camargue were drained and then irrigated with fresh water. The main crop planted, rice, was so successful was it that by the 1960s the Camargue was supplying three-quarters of French demand for rice. Other crops include wheat, rapeseed and fruit orchards.



[Favourite Page](#)
[E-mail Us](#)
[Recommend Us](#)
[Web Links](#)
[Advertise](#)
[Search Site](#)
[Books](#)
[DVDs and CDs](#)
[Surprise](#)
[Today's Weather](#)
[Local Maps](#)
[Articles](#)
[Like this site ?](#)
[Emergencies](#)

[Guides](#)
[Accommodation](#)



The Gard
département

Vines were also reintroduced after the war. They are unique in France in surviving the Phylloxera pandemic that destroyed all the other vineyards in France in the nineteenth century. (So all other existing French vines are derived from rootstocks re-imported into France). The reason that these vines survived the disease is that their roots and stems were under water.



Camargue Foods

Camargue beef. The meat of the Camargue bull is the only beef to have been protected by an 'appellation d'origine contrôlée' (registered designation of origin) in recent times. This meat comes from two breeds of fighting bull: the local Camargue bull (related to the Spanish fighting bull) and the 'brave' breed (descended from Camargue fighting bulls). Bulls are bred in the hills and plains of Lauragais, in the region of the Camargue, and in the mountainous regions of the Pyrenees, Aubrac, Cévennes and Margeride. Stuffed with Camargue rice, it is a speciality of Grau du Roi.

Ollada, or ouillade Beef stew.

Gardiane. A Camargue speciality, this is a 'daube' (a slow-cooked beef stew) made with bull's meat. Cut into cubes and seared in olive oil, the meat is then added to the other ingredients: vegetables, black olives, garlic and smoked bacon, doused in red wine. This dish is usually served with Camargue rice.

Rice. The Camargue's round and long varieties of rice account for a quarter of all rice eaten in France (it used to be three-quarters).

Tellinas. Tellinas or "sunset shells" are small shellfish that thrive in the sands of Camargue. They are cooked a la marinier (ie with onions, herbs and white wine) or with persillade (chopped parsley and garlic)

Camargue Tourist Information

The national nature reserve. Commissioned in 1927, the Reserve covers 13,117 ha from north of the Vaccarès Lagoon to the sea. It is a complex mix of fresh water and brackish wetlands. The public is admitted as far as the sea dike and the zone of la Capelière, the information centre of the park's administrators (the French National Society for the Protection of the Environment). Most of the park is freely accessible, but not all. Traffic is restricted for example along the Sea dike. Dogs and other domestic animals are permitted only in the visitor's centre, not in the park.



This is not a holiday destination for those interested in the more raucous and vacuous types of vacation. This is more for people with an interest in outdoors activities, ecology, wildlife and history.

Riding, walking and cycling. Horses - Camargue horses - are the best means of discovering Camargue.

The *Association Camarguaise de Tourisme Equestre* in Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, offers guided tours for all levels of horsemanship. Phone: +33 (0) 4 90 97 83 23.

For hikers the Camargue offers three large discovery circuits:

- The lake and pink flamingo path to the Sea Dike and the Fangassier saltwater lagoon (22 km).
- The salt path around the salt pans.
- The rice path includes a visit to the rice museum (Musée du Riz) and the Capelière reserve.



Enlightened Traveller is family run organisation catering for the discerning visitors, with an emphasis on learning, walking, recreation, and regeneration. Venues include Camargue-Provence, Gardens of Languedoc, La Grande Motte, Le Cevenol, Provençao, Secrets of the Cevennes, Upper Ceze Valley, Valcezard and Uzege. Looks interesting and different.

Cycling is another good option. For Information on Fugues en France dial +33 (0) 3 60 75 88 33.

There is a Camargue Marina for yachts not too far away.

Camargue Towns.

There are three major towns in the Camargue:

Arles (population 55,000). the unofficial "capital" of the area, is, located at the extreme north of the delta where the River Rhône forks into its two principal branches.

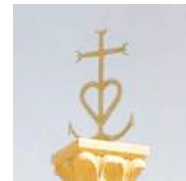
Office du tourisme d'Arles. Phone: +33 (0)4 90 18 41 20.

CCI du Pays d'Arles - www.arles.cci.fr

Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer (population 2,000), An overgrown village and the tourist resort, is a port on the Mediterranean coast close to the mouth of the Petit Rhône. It lies about 45 km to the southwest of Arles. The Camargue in general and Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer in particular are associated with the Roma (Gypsies, French Gitans). In medieval times this was the site of the a Roma pilgrimage made each year to venerate St Sara (or Sarah), It still is today. According to local legend three biblical Marys arrived here by sea - hence the name: Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer means "Saints Marys of the Sea".



The Camargue Cross is the emblem of the church of Saints Maries-de-la-Mer. It is composed of three emblems, an anchor, a cross, and a heart. The upper cross is alleged to represent the trident-shaped tool used by Gardiens. The anchor symbolises the fishermen of the region.



Office du tourisme des Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer: 5, avenue Van- Gogh, BP 34, 13732

Les Saintes-Marie-de-la-Mer. Phone: +33 (0)4 40 97 82 55.

Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer Tourist Office - www.saintesmaries.com

Click on the following internal link for more on or more on Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer "➡"

Click here for more on St Sara, St Martha, St Mary Magdalene, St Mary Salome, St Mary Jacob, Lazarus, Maximus and Sidonius "➡"

Aigues Mortes (population 6,000) the medieval fortress-town on the far western edge, in the Petite Camargue. It is a stunning example of late thirteenth century architecture, built after France annexed the lands of the Counts of Toulouse, giving it a Mediterranean sea port. Click on the following link for more about Aigues Mortes "➡"



Aigues Mortes lies on the Canal Rhône-Sète, an extension of the Canal du Midi, built by Pierre-Paul Riquet a notable Languedoc resident. The Canal is popular for boating holidays and through France's extensive canal network provides a way to get to the Languedoc from the Atlantic Ocean, Northern France and Mediterranean Sea.

Camargue History

People have have lived in the Camargue for centuries, affecting it with drainage, dikes, rice paddies, other cultivation and salt pans. In ancient times, when the Camargue was still an island, it was dedicated to the Egyptian Sun god Ra. (The village of Saintes-Maries de la Mer is built near to the site of Ra's oppidum).

The Camargue was later exploited by the Romans for salt production and in the Middle-Ages by Cistercian and Benedictine monks. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries large estates were founded here by merchants from Arles. Throughout these periods the Rhône Delta, drifted, as river deltas do constantly moving the Camargue Island (Insula Camaria). The Camargue was entirely wild, with free-roaming herds of cattle, sheep and wild horses.



Then people set out on the modern quest to tame nature and create farmland. A sea dike was constructed in 1859, limiting the tidewaters in south Camargue. A decade later an embanked was constructed along the River Rhône to control flooding that submerged the Camargue. These dikes and embankments created land fit for farming, but cut off the Camargue from its supplies of fresh and sea water - and from the silt provided by flooding.

As soon as the sea dike was built, wealthy men started creating new *manades* traditional Camarguese estates. A *manade* is a ranch generally with more than 200 bulls controlled by a bayle-gardian. You might come across mention of Marquis Folco of Baroncelli (1869-1943) an aristocrat of Florentine origin. In 1893, who created a *manade* here.

The desire to grow greater amounts of rice was an incentive to extend the irrigation ditches after the Second World War, permitting the reclamation of more land. This called for more water control equipment. The result of this human tampering is that the Camargue's rich wildlife now requires careful and expensive management of the water resources that support it. Pumping, irrigation and draining stations dot the landscape along with a network of drainage channels throughout the delta.

Further Information

Parc Naturel Régional de Camargue. Website - www.parc-camargue.fr

Visitor's centre, The Camargue Regional Nature Park Administration, Maison du Parc

Phone : +33 (0)4 90 97 86 32

e-mail : info@parc-camargue.fr

Website : The Camargue Regional Nature Park: www.parc-camargue.fr



Tourist information about the Camargue: website - www.camargue.fr ➡

Regional Tourist board: www.crt-paca.fr ➡

Recomended site, ProvenceBeyond: <http://www.provencebeyond.com/sites/camargue.html> ➡

Riz de Camargue: www.rizdecamargue.com

Camargue and its gardians and Birding in the Camargue, both at <http://www.greatriver.com>

Musée Camarguais

Mas du Pont de Rousty, 13200 Arles.

Phone: +33 (0)4 90 97 10 82.

Books

Cabanes de Camargue, éd. du Parc. (In French)

A la découverte du sentier du Mas du Pont de Rousty, éd. du Parc. (In French)

Le Courrier du Parc, revue semestrielle, éd. du Parc. (In French)

Camargue et gardians, éd. du Parc. (In French)

La flore de Camargue, éd. du Parc. (In French)

Bouches-du-Rhône, Guides Gallimard. (In French)

The two main characters start their honeymoon in the Camargue in a novel of Ernest Hemingway's entitled, "The Garden of Eden,"

Films

At least two old films are set in the Camargue: *Le Gardian de Camargue*, (1910) Directed by Léonce Perret; and *Roi de Camargue* (1934) Directed by Jacques de Baroncelli

Songs & Poetry

The Camargue features in a well known (and typically nostalgic) song by Georges Brassens: *Heureux qui comme Ulysse*

The Great Occitan poet Frederic Mistral came from Bouches du Rhône just northeast of the camargue and wrote much about this area.

Trivia

The Rolls-Royce Camargue was named after the Camargue breed of horses rather than the area from which the horse takes its name. It is considered by many automotive enthusiasts to be the most distinctive Rolls-Royce vehicle ever produced. It is a two-door coupé introduced in March of 1975. When it was launched, the Camargue was the most expensive production car in the world.

amazon.com
and you're done.



[The Beast of the Camargue](#)
Xavier-Marie Bonno...

[Lynn Butler, photography from horseb...](#)
Lynn Hyman Butler

[Horses of the Camargue](#)
Hans Silvester, So...

[Horses of the Camargue](#)

[Rolls-Royce Silver Shadow Bentley T-...](#)
Malcolm Bobbitt

[Secrets de Camargue](#)
Luc Chazel, Muriel...

amazon.co.uk
See details & conditions
Privacy information



[The Camargue](#)
Edwin Mullins
New £12.99
Best £8.32

[The Beast of the Camargue](#)
Xavier-Marie Bonno...
New £4.39
Best £2.77

[Praxisratgeber Klassikerkauf Rolls-R...](#)
Malcolm Bobbitt
New £8.35
Best £8.13

[From the Camargue to the Alps](#)
Bernard Levin
New £7.19
Best £0.49

[Watersteps Through France](#)
Bill Cooper, Laure...
New £11.69
Best £2.20

[IGN 170 ~ Montpellier Nîmes](#)
IGN
Best £5.85

Privacy Information

Privacy Information

◀ Back to: Aude département

▲

Nextpage: Hérault département ▶

Aude département

Inter-City Distances

Gard département

Hérault département



Lozère département

Pyrénées-Orientales département

[Languedoc Home](#) [About this Site](#) [Site Map](#) [Links](#) [Contact Webmaster](#) [Copyright and Legal](#) Search site for:

Medieval Castles

Castles
Manor Houses
Chateaux
Medieval Life
Medieval Warfare
Medieval Heraldry
Castle Tours

Languedoc Books

Guides
Maps
Cathars
Castles
Counts of Toulouse
Rennes-le-Château
Holy Grail
Troubadours

Penthouse in France

Penthouse for vacation letting in the heart of Cathar Country, South of France. Ideal base for Languedoc holidays based in Carcassonne or on the Canal du Midi

Languedoc Gîte

Self catering rental accommodation in the South of France located in a pretty market town in the Languedoc near to Rennes-le-Château.

Real Standard Poodles

Standard Poodles for sale in the South of France. Photographs of earlier litters. Good water retrievers and working dogs.

Aude Cottage

Village house in the heart of Cathar Country in the Languedoc, newly refurbished. Self catering. Walking, cycling, wildlife, Cathar history.

Rennes-le-Château

Kabbalah, Inquisition, Knights Templar, Priory of Sion, Holy Grail, Troubadours, Sacred Geometry, Gnostics, The Shroud of Turin, Ark of the Covenant, Voynich Manuscript

http://www.languedoc-france.info/07020201_camargue.htm

Page 8 of 8